



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION
Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 01 2016

IN REPLY REFER TO:
IACC001224

Mr. Henry Pino
Board President
Blackwater Community School
3652 E. Blackwater School Road
Coolidge, Arizona 85128

Dear Ms. Pino:

Thank you for your letter dated March 23, 2016, with updated information in support of the Blackwater Community School's (School) request for approval of a one grade level expansion for school year 2016-2017. We apologize for our delay in responding to your letter.

The School is a Kindergarten to second grade school. The one grade level expansion will add grade 3 to the School. Adding the third grade will provide a continuum of high quality education for the Gila River Indian Community (Tribe). Without this waiver, the children will continue to leave the school after the second grade to attend the Tribe's charter school or a local public school. This does not meet the needs of the Tribe.

With the passage of Public Law 113-76, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to approve a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded school to expand its education program up to one additional grade level when the Secretary determines the proposed grade expansion supports the mission of the BIE.

The Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs and the Acting BIE Director support the request for the one grade level expansion for the School. The Tribe's educational needs would be better met by adding one grade level at the School, allowing children to remain in the BIE-funded tribal school for an additional year providing increased continuity and stability.

We are also addressing the School's request for a waiver under 25 CFR § 1.2 of the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) regulations which require funding to be based on the average student enrollment for the previous three school years (25 CFR Part 39.202-39.208).

In addition, you will continue to work with the Indian Affairs Office of Facilities, Property, and Safety Management concerning the School facilities you want added to the facilities inventory. We congratulate you on your successful proposal for your school replacement.

This letter will serve as official notice of approval for the one grade level expansion and approval of your waiver request under the ISEP regulations for school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019.

If you have questions or require further follow up, please contact Ms. Jackie Cheek, Special Assistant to the Director, at (202) 208-6983 or by email at Jacquelyn.Cheek@bie.edu.

Sincerely,



Ann Marie Bledsoe Downes
Acting Director, Bureau of Indian Education

cc: Principal, Blackwater Community School
Deputy Director for School Operations, BIE
Associate Deputy Director, Tribally Controlled Schools, BIE
Director, Office of Facilities, Property, and Safety Management, Indian Affairs